

OSCE

NEWSLETTER

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe



OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Austrian Foreign Minister, Wolfgang Schüssel, answering questions from the media

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OSCE CiO lists priorities for 2000

Co-ordinated regional approach to security issues by international community needed

At the first meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in the new year, Austria's Foreign Minister, Wolfgang Schüssel, the incoming Chairman-in-Office of the Organization, outlined the priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship. In his address to the Permanent Representatives of the participating States on 13 January, Mr. Schüssel emphasized the overall importance of the regional approach to tackling security issues in the OSCE area. As specific goals of the Chairmanship, he hoped to see significant progress in the return of 7.5 million refugees and internally-displaced

persons in the OSCE area; a functioning Stability Pact for the Balkans; political, rather than military solutions to the conflicts in the Caucasus; and the organization of free and fair elections in Kosovo as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

He told the OSCE's regular body for political consultation and decision-making that these were ambitious aims, but, "If we can say at the end of 2000 that there are fewer trouble spots than at the beginning of the year, we shall have made enormous progress."

He said that the Organization this year faced a series of challenges through-

out the OSCE area with regard to the prevention, settlement and management of conflicts and crises.

"In order to meet best possible the demands on the Chairman-in-Office, I have designated personal representatives who will support me in my activities. These are Ambassador Albert Rohan for South-Eastern Europe, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk for Nagorno-Karabakh, Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini for other missions in the Caucasus and Ambassador Jan Kubis for Central Asia."

He singled out South-Eastern Europe as the "acid test" for Europe.

“Through the organization of elections in Kosovo, the OSCE will have an important responsibility in terms of the democratization and – hopefully – stabilization of the fragile political landscape,” he said.

In this regional context, he expressed the OSCE’s desire for full co-operation with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). However, this co-operation was contingent on fundamental democratization, including a political leadership elected through free and fair elections. On that basis, “the door can be opened to participation by FRY in the OSCE’s work”.

He stressed the importance of conducting elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as focusing on the return of refugees, reform of the legal system and the promotion of independent media there. Elections in Croatia, resulting in a new Government, would also assist in the central issue of the return of refugees to that country.

In Albania, the OSCE would continue to play its stabilizing role, while in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia it would assist with confidence-building and helping the various ethnic groups to live peacefully together.

Regarding the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, Mr. Schüssel cautioned that the high hopes vested in it must not be disappointed, and that transparent and efficient co-operation between the structures of the Stability Pact needed to be rapidly established. Recalling that the OSCE had a particular responsibility there, he emphasized that the specific ways in which the Organization could further the aims and measures envisaged by the Pact required looking at in greater detail.

“If we are serious in our pronounced aim of creating a common security space, we must give equal treatment to conflicts and problems throughout the entire OSCE area,” the Minister said.

Thus gave prominence in his speech to the situation in the northern Caucasus, pointing out the difficulty of combating terrorism directly, without it leading on to humanitarian disasters. “The fight against terrorism is necessary but the means used must be proportionate, and political, not military, solutions must have priority.”

A contribution by the OSCE in the northern Caucasus, similar in importance to that being made in Kosovo, could be envisaged, he said, adding that the Austrian Chairmanship would continue the efforts of the Norwegian Chairmanship to offer the Organization’s assistance in seeking a political solution to this conflict.

More information about the activities and programme of the Austrian Chairmanship is available on-line: www.osze.at

Mr. Schüssel recalled that the Organization had reacted promptly to the concerns of Georgia by agreeing to an observation mission along Georgia’s border with the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation. It would also continue to pursue a policy of small steps in assisting with the unresolved conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

In the southern Caucasus, the OSCE offered the assistance of the Minsk Group in reaching a lasting and comprehensive political solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, encour-

aged by the series of discussions between the Heads of State of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Among other areas, Mr Schüssel particularly mentioned the importance of focusing attention on the situation in Central Asia: “We would like to initiate a substantive dialogue with a view to defining a more action-oriented role for the OSCE in this area.”

Making progress in solving the Transnistria problem, as well as paving the way towards real democracy in Belarus were two special areas of importance. In other countries in transition, including Ukraine, Latvia and Estonia, significant positive developments would continue being monitored.

Another of the main concerns of the Austrian Chairmanship would be the swift implementation of the REACT concept (Rapid Expert Assistance and Co-operation Teams), called for in the Charter for European Security which was adopted at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in November last year. This concept is designed to improve the ability to identify, prepare and deploy non-military expertise, including components of a peacekeeping operation.

“Prompt action is of great significance for a security organization like the OSCE, which sees its prime purpose in conflict management,” Mr. Schüssel said.

Pointing out that the OSCE could not operate effectively on its own, he stressed the need for well co-ordinated relations with its international partners, underpinned by the concept of the Platform for Co-operative Security, also adopted in Istanbul.

Austria, the Minister said, was proud to be the Host Country of the Organization, and its existence filled him with optimism, but he hoped also during 2000 to find a way whereby the OSCE’s activities could be continued with fair burden-sharing among its participating States.

“Building on our strengths”

Extracts from the address by Wolfgang Schüssel, Foreign Minister of Austria and OSCE Chairman-in-Office to the Permanent Council, 13 January 2000

Our strength lies in the fact that we form a common platform of presently 54 participating States; we can detect conflicts at an early stage and prevent them; and we commit ourselves on a daily basis to the defence of human and minority rights, to democracy, independent media and free and fair elections. Building from these strengths, all we can do is to endeavour to provide support to all efforts within and between participating States to find solutions to political conflicts without the use of military force. Of decisive importance is the fact that the OSCE’s starting point is the situation of the individual.

“The foundations were laid at the successful Istanbul Summit for the OSCE to continue to play a vital role in the ultimate aim of all our activities, encapsulated in the Summit declaration: ‘to improve human security and thereby to make a difference in the life of the individual.’ Ten years ago we exchanged the artificial security of the East-West conflict for the opportunity to make our own decisions on security. This means that today it is no longer a few heads of State who decide on security and co-operation, but rather that security decisions are made every day in a wide variety of places: at border posts and party headquarters, by citizens’ organizations and in nuclear power plants, polling stations and newspaper offices.

“The Helsinki Final Act and the Helsinki process set in motion by our predecessors opened the doors for courageous citizens and NGOs to work for human rights and the development of a democratic civil society. As we enter a new century, it is time to open these

doors even wider and send out a renewed signal of hope and encouragement. It is in this spirit that the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Helsinki Final Act should be conceived.

“Security remains threatened by armies, soldiers, weapons and acts of military aggression. In the majority of cases, however, crises are not so much acts of aggression between States as the effects of an ‘uncivil’ society characterized by shortage and misery, serious violations of human and minority rights, organized crime and environmental disasters. The success of the OSCE’s activities can be measured in the practical and often unspectacular improvements in the security of the people in our countries...”

“The great importance attached to the human dimension in the OSCE’s comprehensive security concept reflects the close link between the stability of inter-State relations and the peace-promoting effect of strong and self-assured civil societies. Today we have also come to see this as the lasting message of the Helsinki Final Act. It is with this in mind that we will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act this summer in Vienna together with those who, as dissidents and civil rights activists, worked to ensure that the citizens of their countries could live in truth, as Vaclav Havel put it.

“In the human dimension in particular, NGOs have an important role to play in reporting human rights violations and raising public awareness of these issues. They are our best allies in the establishment of civil societies, and in conflict regions the OSCE must work even more closely with them.

“In military conflict situations our attention must be focused on the victims, whose interests are not usually represented by anyone. As part of an integrated approach to security policy we intend to highlight the question of children affected by armed conflicts.

“In the economic dimension I believe that the OSCE’s primary task is to provide political stimulus for greater economic collaboration among the OSCE participating States and between these States and the relevant international economic and financial institutions and thereby promoting synergies...”

“Many international organizations are active in making the world a little safer. Furthermore, the OSCE would not be capable on its own of effectively combating the diverse and extremely complex threats to security. This is only possible if the division of labour among the different international organizations remains flexible and problem-oriented. The call for co-ordination and co-operation might belong to the standard repertoire of multilateral conferences. Notwithstanding it does not make it any less relevant or pressing. This is not only a matter for the secretariats. We, the participating States are responsible for political guidance and should not forget our responsibilities either...”

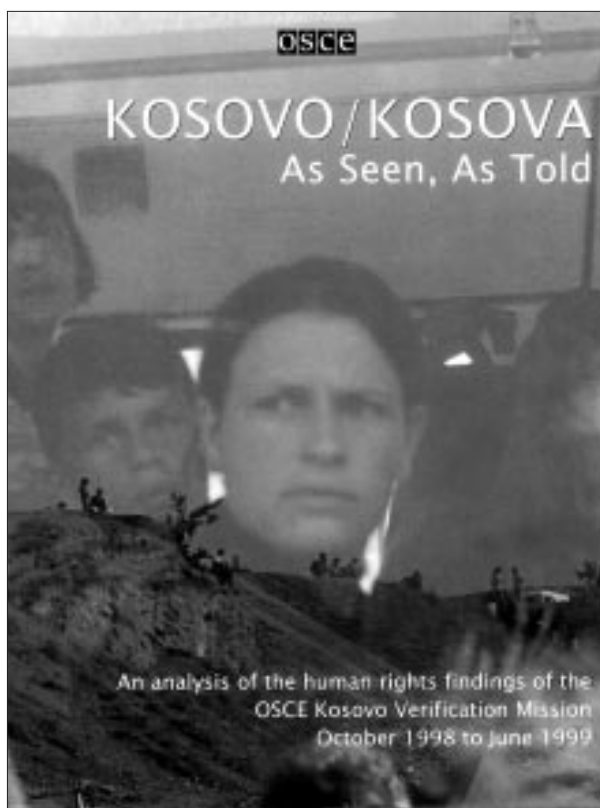
“Today’s conflicts and crises call for international solidarity. It fills me with optimism that we have an organization such as the OSCE that promotes international solidarity with a view to strengthening democracy and the rule of law. If the Organization did not already exist, we would no doubt have to invent it today.”

OSCE records human rights violations in Kosovo

On 6 December, the OSCE released two documents that detail extensive human rights violations in Kosovo. The first report, *Kosovo/Kosova – As Seen, As Told*, is an analysis of the human rights findings of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission. Hundreds of documents compiled in Kosovo up to 20 March 1999, plus nearly 3,000 interviews conducted afterwards with refugees in Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, were examined by an expert team at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw.

The document presents probably the most extensive and systematic survey to date of human rights in Kosovo in the first half of 1999. A grim catalogue of violations is described, illustrated by the experiences of hundreds of individuals and communities. In particular, the report powerfully conveys a picture of Kosovo in the period of the NATO air campaign against Yugoslavia. Examining the actions of both sides to Kosovo's internal armed conflict, the report concludes that there was no semblance of balance in the human rights abuses committed. Overwhelmingly, it was the Kosovo Albanian population that suffered.

The second document,



Kosovo/Kosova – As Seen, As Told, Part II, records the period between 14 June and 31 October, when more than 800,000 Kosovar Albanian refugees returned to a war-torn Kosovo, under KFOR protection and a UN administration. The report, prepared by human rights teams of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, analyses human rights conditions and events in each of the five regions of Kosovo. It notes that the desire for revenge has been the primary motive for the vast majority of human rights violations. Kosovo Serbs, Roma, Muslim Slavs and others have been targeted by elements of the Kosovar Albanian population for expulsion, harassment, intimidation, house-burning, abductions and death.

The second part calls for thorough investigations into allegations, as well as for an increase in international police and judicial experts to help break the cycle of violence in Kosovo. The report notes that deficiencies in law enforcement capabilities and the administration of justice have contributed to a climate of impunity, within which human rights violations are more likely to occur.

Sample media coverage of the OSCE report can be found in *Press Profile* on page 23.

Both documents, totalling more than 900 pages, are available on-line via the OSCE website www.osce.org/kosovo/reports/hr

The reports were followed by a human rights conference in Kosovo, held 10 and 11 December (see report on page 10).

Writing history

‘Compiling the record of human rights violations’

By Urdur Gunnarsdottir

Behind the enormous OSCE documentation of human rights violations in Kosovo is a group of dedicated people, international staff and Kosovars, who have all been strongly affected by what they have heard and seen. One of those is Nazlie Bala, a Kosovo-Albanian human rights activist who has been working as an assistant and interpreter for the two OSCE Missions for 11 months. She has interviewed and translated in hundreds of cases that form part of the two human rights volumes on Kosovo, which the OSCE has published.

“In this report we wrote history and it means a lot to me to have taken part in it,” says Bala. “Now on the other hand it is time to move ahead.”

Bala, 32, has been active with human rights groups in Kosovo for ten years. For eight years she was a researcher and field coordinator with the Council for Defence of Human Rights and Freedom. Almost two years ago, she founded her own human right organization, called the Women’s Human Rights Center, and is planning to return to the project she started.

Bala met OSCE officials shortly after the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) was established in late 1998.

“There was a need for the Organization to recruit a local activist, someone who knew the area well and was familiar with the situation here. So I joined the Mission in January this year and still work with the OSCE because it has given me valuable experience that will be of good use in my own human rights work here. The OSCE is not going to be here forever and we have to be ready to

take over promoting and supporting human rights.”

Bala stayed in Pristina for 10 days after the KVM was evacuated in late March, prior to the NATO air-campaign. But with her family she was then ordered

boxing gloves. I pounded away on a boxing bag twice a week during this period,” she recalls.

Returning to Kosovo with the OSCE advance team in mid-June, since then she has been working on current human



Nazli Bala, human rights activist in Kosovo (right), exchanging notes with Corey Levine

out by Serb forces. She went to Gostivar in the former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia and resumed her work with the OSCE human rights division immediately. The testimonies of human rights violations given in the refugee camps were gruesome and it was hard on Bala, herself a refugee, to take them down.

“I did not share anything I heard there with my family and friends, and I could not discuss this either with my colleagues. So I tried to think of something else, keep up the morale and make jokes, even though this wasn’t really the time for it. But still I was torn apart by what was happening so I started going to a sports club, where they lent me a pair of

rights investigations, documenting mass graves, assisting in preparing of the Kosovo Human Rights Conference in December (see News from the Field in this issue). Dramatic changes have taken place in the region and not all of them positive, as the second OSCE human rights report clearly states. “It hurts to see the violence continue. I expected it to happen but it still is disappointing to witness it. In spite of all this, I am a big optimist. I believe that people here oppose violence and crime, and I do believe that this will go over. It will take time but it will happen.”

Ms Gunnarsdottir is Press Officer with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo

Developing the operational capabilities of the OSCE

The Secretary General describes his first six months and his plans

Ambassador Jan Kubis, of Slovakia, is the third Secretary General of the OSCE. A career diplomat, his connection with the OSCE, and its predecessor, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, goes back several years. Under the 1992 Czechoslovak Chairmanship of the then CSCE, he chaired the Committee of Senior Officials (now the Senior Council), while from July 1994 to June 1998, he was Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre. Between then and rejoining the OSCE in June last year, he served as the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for Tajikistan. After six months in his present OSCE post, he gave this interview in December to the OSCE Newsletter.

Newsletter: When you rejoined the OSCE last year as its Secretary General, did you have a number of specific ideas you wished to implement?

I was coming back with several years of direct experience with the Organization, so of course I had several ideas and plans. But I also knew that I was coming back to a different Organization, even after just a one-year break. Clearly, major activities, first and foremost the deployment and ultimately the necessary withdrawal of the Kosovo Verification Mission, had had a profound effect. Besides, at the time that I returned our preparations for the Istanbul Summit were very much affecting some of the thinking in the Organization and therefore some of

the perspectives for the Organization.

Nevertheless, I came back here with a certain understanding of what I would like to do: first of all to strengthen the management of the Organization as such, and to improve the way that the Secretary General, as the chief administrative officer of the Organization, discharges his responsibilities. I was fully aware of certain problems from my previous stay, regarding some elements of management, including management of our field operations. These are not down to someone's ill will, but are definitely due to the fact that we are just trying to catch up with what is happening in the Organization. Developments have been so rapid and tasks coming before the Organization are sometimes so enormous, changing the whole environment, that we often have to behave in a reactive way. Yet the situation has been gradually changing and recently, after the Istanbul Summit, with the necessary determination.

NL: Were any developments already underway that helped you in implementing your plans?

Yes, certain changes had started before my arrival, for instance, regarding the budgetary process. We had moved into programme budgeting, beginning in 1998, but of course we have to develop this further. As I said it's also a question of management of our field operations and assistance to our field operations. We are a highly decentralized organization with major responsibility delegated to our field operations. But we still like to have a certain degree

of control to ensure that OSCE activities in the field are being based on a clear political mandate and guidance from the decision-making bodies, and that OSCE rules and regulations are being implemented and respected throughout the OSCE itself. So this was probably my first task.

NL: How would you list your other priorities?

The second task was how better to assist the Chairmanship in discharging its responsibilities and obligations, through the activities of the Secretariat, specifically those of myself and my colleagues in the Conflict Prevention Centre, those dealing with operations, budget, etc.. It means I have had to consider what is the character of the relations between the SG and Chairmanship and to try to bring forward certain recommendations or proposals in that regard. Again this is very much oriented towards our field operations. This is also the time of year when we look into the lessons learnt from our co-operation with last year's Chairmanship. We also have been in very close contact with the incoming Austrian Chairmanship team and we are now trying to set up certain patterns of co-operation, starting with how we could best support the political objectives of the Austrian Chairmanship.

Probably the third field which I had as my priority was to look into the way of interaction with other employees of the Organization, besides those in the CPC. It means first of all co-operation and information-sharing to the greatest

extent possible, as well as encouraging sort of joint forward-looking thinking with other OSCE institutions and the Chairmanship, including then the Permanent Council and the participating States.

Then the fourth main field was to look into our co-operation with international organizations both inter-governmental and non-governmental and again, from that perspective how to enhance our impact and create more synergy, mainly in and through our field operations. As is well known, probably the best and the most developed comparative advantage the OSCE has are our field operations. Here we do co-operate with a good number of partners, but there is still big room for improvement. I witnessed this from the UN side during my year in Tajikistan. I had my then OSCE colleagues there, as well as a number of other international organizations and NGOs. But in spite of all our efforts to improve co-ordination, I would say we were really only somewhere midway through the process. So when I came here to assume my new responsibilities as the Secretary General, one of the tasks I put before myself is to look into co-operation with international organizations and to improve this as necessary.

NL: Looking back over the past six months, how far would you assess you have been able to achieve these tasks?

It is too early for me to talk about success or achievements at this point in time, but I can definitely say some first steps have been taken in a new orientation. I have been able to delimit more specifically what are the concrete tasks within this broad frame work of objectives, and also probably to fine tune certain areas in understanding what I would like to do in the future.

Besides that, what was extremely

important in this period were some of the decisions taken at the Istanbul OSCE Summit which again moved us forward



OSCE Secretary General, Jan Kubis

and gave us a clearer perspective of what are our tasks. Also, since the Autumn season is usually the period of budget preparation and discussion and adoption, it focused us very much on the issues of better budgetary management, better management of our field operations and internal auditing, including financial auditing.

Another element is that we were active participants in the preparation for the Istanbul Summit and therefore we were able to deliver some of the points for consideration before the OSCE Review Conference, preceding the Istanbul Summit. Again, we used the opportunity not only to deliver some of our points, recommendations and concerns, but to come out with a number of proposals. At the same time, it gave us the possibility to look into matters and evaluate and assess where we are. So through this process, I believe that were able to pinpoint a good number of more specific tasks in all four fields.

As to ways of improving our co-ordination of the management of field operations and inter-relations with other OSCE institutions, as well as work with other international organizations, we have started the discussion and we will continue and fix certain modalities of co-operation very soon, with additional touches regarding our field operations at the Heads of Missions meeting in January.

NL: What does this process mean in practice?

Regarding the administration and management, first of all we must bring about an improvement of the whole budgetary process, starting with the preparation, and this must be done in close co-operation with our field operations, because of the delegation of a number of tasks there. It is also in many ways primarily their responsibility, but we in the Secretariat are requested by the participating States to have a much enhanced role in the whole process, not only as a sort of guardian for the OSCE rules and regulations, but also as a kind of filter which that assists the participating States to better focus field operations, particularly on their priorities. So we function as a sort of transmitting mechanism in a way, and the first filter through which budgets must be processed before reaching the participating States.

One could say that I'm only talking here about budget matters, but it is through the budget that we are assess and form opinions on a whole range of activities. We can effectively assist the participating States in the way they prepare their positions, giving them better understanding regarding the operations of our Missions, So although it's done through technical means, I would say it is a politically important task.

Coming to international organiza-

tions, in Istanbul we received new guidance regarding our co-operation with them, by the adoption of the Charter for European Security and in particular the Platform for Co-operative Security. This gives us a firm basis and guidance on how to structure our future relations with international organizations. During Istanbul and since, I've had a number of meetings with different partners from several international organizations. We talked with the Council of Europe, the European Union, and the European Commission and talks will continue with some members of the UN system. For example, I was able to have good discussions with our UN colleagues in New York recently, on ways to improve our co-operation and to push it forward.

NL: What other aspects of the Istanbul Summit would you single out for emphasis?

From my point of view, Istanbul resulted in extremely important decisions regarding the strengthening of the operational capabilities of the Organization and the participating States took a number of important decisions, again moving us forward in this field. Regarding the strengthening of the operational capabilities, the decisions to develop the REACT programme (Editor's note: Rapid Expert Assistance and Co-operation Teams), as well as to establish an Operation Centre in the OSCE Secretariat, are the ones which, in my opinion, can bring a new quality to the process of planning and deployment of our field operations in particular, as well as to the whole field of our co-operation with other international partners -- both in the field and on the level of headquarters.

The objective of the REACT programme is to enable this Organization, and first of all its participating States, to identify, prepare and deploy non-mili-

tary expertise, including components of a peacekeeping operation extremely rapidly -- probably more rapidly than many of our partners. It will do this by creating a sort of roster of candidates available at short notice for this kind of deployment.

What I also had in mind when I spoke about important decisions of the participating States in strengthening our ability to act quickly and to be up to the task, was the decision to improve the employment conditions. A decision was taken which is bringing us closer to the other main international organizations, first of all our colleagues from the UN system. It should enable us to compete for the most qualified personnel, to recruit them and then to keep them as necessary in our Institutions. So I would say that was an extremely important decision that can also be taken, in a way, as a sign of a maturing of this Organization, a recognition that we have certain functions as Institutions, that we are now a firm part of the international landscape and that, if we have to be prepared to co-operate and interact with other players in the international field, we need competitive conditions to do so.

NL: How important do you consider it is for the Organization to convey an accurate image of itself to the outside world?

I would say that it is extremely important. This is another one of the fields which I'm thinking about, together with the participating States and with the Chairmanship. It is a question not only of the image but also of the visibility of this Organization. Unfortunately, the OSCE is acting at what can be called the "soft" end of the scale of conflict -- early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, post conflict resolution, etc.. Very often, we are dealing either with anticipatory tasks or with defusing situ-

ations before they develop too far, and, of course, they don't have that necessary attraction for those who are creating the image in the media etc. So it's sometimes very difficult for us to have the appropriate public image, since it's quite natural that media are focused on matters which are politically right in the spotlight of international attention, or else are important from this or that participating State's point of view. There may be internal political developments, or they might be in focus because of the humanitarian dimension. Whatever the case, very often we are just unable to deliver the kind of hard "news" that attracts focused attention.

We are trying, of course, but the fact is that, through our work, for instance field operations lasting for years, we are a factor for stability. This is something which is very difficult for us to "sell" to the media, to get their attention. We should try to improve this, but I believe it will come rather slowly. Operations such as Kosovo are definitely helping us to establish ourselves in a much more identifiable way, not just vis-à-vis the media community, but also the general public.

Similarly our political role in the discussions of the developments in and around Chechnya, and specifically the activities of the Chairmanship, again bring us some sort of attention. But I can also name another two or three examples out of dozens of other developments and engagements of this Organization, which are not highlighted in any way, but that as I said is probably natural.

NL: You mentioned visibility as well as image, could you elaborate a little more on that point?

Yes, I believe that it is very important to give the Organization its due. We have to ensure that every time that, for instance, we are engaged in delivering

something important that it is attributed to us, as the Organization responsible. Sometimes the international community is acting here or there, very often in complex, composite operations, and it may be only the key agency in the league that gets mentioned. This is happening on occasions in Kosovo, but also in other places the leading partner, or umbrella partner, is being mentioned and the OSCE seems to be hidden behind.

This also applies the other way, regarding our partners in different composite operations. We are now talking, for instance, with our colleagues from the Council of Europe, the EU, and the European Commission on the question of visibility. Very often they support us as the OSCE in certain operations and they have the very same valid claim to visibility. So public relations is one of those spheres which I believe must be in the focus of our, and my, attention as a part of the wider picture.

NL: With respect to both image and visibility, do you see the forthcoming 25th anniversary of the signature of the Helsinki Final Act as having a major potential impact?

I hope that, with the Chairmanship, we shall be able to use this special anniversary to put down our marker. In the Secretariat we began our preparations last year and certain activities in this line have already come to fruition. We have selected a 25th Anniversary logo, and this has been introduced on our general fact-sheet about the OSCE. It is also featured on the cover of the Helsinki Final Act booklet, that we have re-issued in a special edition. And we have prepared a number of recommendations as a sort of action plan of small-scale activities. Some of this could be covered by normal budgetary means, and some of this will require some extra budgetary financing, for which we would like to get the sup-

port of the participating States. We shall be contributing an article here and there, preparing some media material etc.

However, the general trend is not to have some spectacular celebrations, but to mark this anniversary by individual OSCE participating States, and also in our field activities by appropriate activities. For example, there will be some activity in Finland, and we already have an invitation to an international conference or seminar connected with this anniversary.

With the Austrian Chairmanship for the year 2000, we are beginning to discuss what kind of activities we might have here. Of course, many of them will be sponsored and conducted by Austria, but some of them we can participate in or support. Definitely, there should be at least one key activity in the summer, around the time of the year when, 25 years ago, the Helsinki Final Act became the basic OSCE charter.

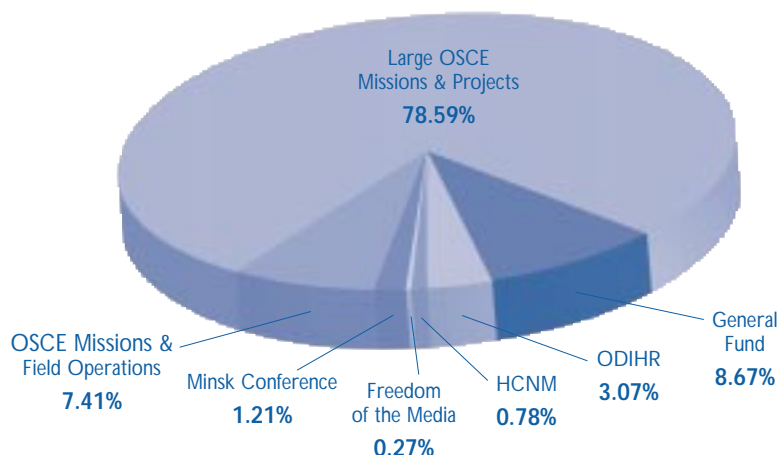
OSCE 2000 budget adopted by Permanent Council

On 15 December, the Permanent Council adopted the OSCE budget for the year 2000, a record level of 192 mil-

lion euros. This represents a more than 30 per cent increase over the 1999 budget of 153 million euros, and compares

with a budget of 24 million euros when the OSCE succeeded the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe in 1995.

The OSCE 2000 Unified Budget by Fund: 192, 179, 200 euros



Budget shares of major OSCE activities

However, the rise in programmed expenditure has reflected the rapid expansion of OSCE field activities to which roughly 86 per cent of the budget is now allocated. The three largest missions – in Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina – alone account for approximately 79 per cent of the total OSCE budget.

The budget decision also addresses a number of other measures to be implemented in 2000. These include improving the budgetary and billing processes, strengthening internal oversight and financial control, improving the OSCE information system, support for OSCE

activities in the economic dimension, and implementing an action plan aimed at creating a better gender balance within the Organization.

The 2000 budget also reflects the Permanent Council's decision to align OSCE working conditions with those of the United Nations system. In his remarks

to the Permanent Council, the Secretary General expressed his strong satisfaction with this decision, thanking in particular the Norwegian Chairmanship for the impetus it had given to this issue. He described the decision as an important contribution to strengthening the Organization's operational capability and

towards securing high quality staff for OSCE Institutions.

The Secretary General also welcomed the proposed strengthening of internal oversight and financial control, including quality and value-for-money assurance and management advice.



News from the field

The OSCE currently has Missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Kosovo (FRY), Latvia, Skopje (FYROM), Moldova, and Tajikistan, as well as an Assistance Group to Chechnya, a Presence in Albania, an Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus, and a Project Co-ordinator for the Ukraine. The following are highlights from the work of some of the field operations during the past month.

Istanbul Summit decisions on Moldova received positively

In the Istanbul Summit Declaration, adopted at the end of the meeting, OSCE Heads of State and Government reiterated their expectation of an "early, orderly and complete withdrawal" of Russian forces from the Republic of Moldova, and set the end of 2002 as the deadline. They also asked the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna to consider expanding the mandate of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, so that it may assist in the process. This could include co-ordinating financial and technical assistance and ensuring the transparency of the process. A fund for voluntary international financial assistance may also be established under OSCE auspices.

These decisions, and especially the establishment of a concrete deadline, have been welcomed by the Moldovan authorities. Other OSCE participating States also welcomed the decisions. In a joint statement, the representatives of Georgia, Uzbekistan, Armenia and Moldova stated that the text of the Declaration represents "encouraging signs" of progress regarding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova.

Kosovo Human Rights Conference focuses on 10 "action areas"

An international Human Rights Conference hosted by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo from 10 to 11 December, ended with a declaration calling for swift action on ten priority areas, including detainees and missing persons, democratic policing, protecting minorities, preventing torture, housing and property disputes, children's and women's rights, and human rights institutions. About 600 delegates participated in the proceedings which were aimed at raising awareness of and promote respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms laid down in the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other internationally-recognized human rights conventions.

The conference was organized by the OSCE in co-operation with the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Council of Europe, as well as local groups.

The final declaration, adopted unanimously by all participants, called for

"concrete action in the fields of justice and the rule of law", respect for diversity, tolerance and pluralism. The conference, which brought together international organizations and experts, as well as local NGOs involved in human rights programmes in Kosovo, was the first such event in Kosovo dedicated to the topic of human rights protection and promotion.

Project Implementation Workshop held in Tajikistan

The OSCE Mission to Tajikistan organized and hosted a workshop from 14 to 16 December, on Project Implementation in Central Asia. The workshop, held in the capital, Dushanbe, was the first of its kind, and focused on practical issues such as project planning and design, fund-raising, project management, financing, and project evaluation. The aim of the exercise was to gain skills and improve project implementation on the one hand, but also to share experiences and improve communications between the OSCE offices in the region.

Around 20 OSCE international and local staff from the OSCE Mission to Tajikistan, the OSCE Central Asia Liaison



Project Implementation Workshop held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan

son Office in Uzbekistan, and the OSCE Centres in Almaty, Ashgabad, Bishkek, as well as the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, participated in the workshop. A number of international agencies and NGOs operating in the region were also involved in making presentations. Two similar training workshops on different subjects are planned for 2000, one to be held in Ashgabad, Turkmenistan, while the second is again to be held in Dushanbe.

OSCE provides support to prosecutors in Bosnia and Herzegovina

With the assistance of the Swedish government, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina organized a Three-day training seminar in Sarajevo for Bosnian prosecutors. The seminar was the first of several seminars and workshops aimed at providing support to prosecutors throughout the country. The project aims at strengthening the position of the prosecutor in the Bosnian legal system by encouraging individual prosecutors to assume a more active role in trials and to co-operate better with the police in complex investigations. The seminars also look at the question of harmonizing Bosnian legal procedures with those of other European countries. The participants, 25 pros-

ecutors from both the Federation and Republika Srpska, have already started working together on concrete solutions for their problems. In January, an additional seminar for a second group of prosecutors is to be held in Banja Luka.

Training courses begin for new Kosovo civil administrators

A two-day course organized by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo on 13 and 14 December brought together 45 civil administrators from 22 municipalities for training on procedures for issuing certificates of death, birth and marriage. The participants discussed the issues relating to the complex task of registering deaths, births and marriages in Kosovo after the war. The OSCE and United Nations Civil Administrators answered and clarified question relating to the new procedures that are currently being implemented throughout Kosovo.

“The registration process has to be done properly and in a way that is internationally recognized, otherwise these documents will not be accepted outside Kosovo,” said Arne Piel Christensen, Director of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo Democratization Department, at the beginning of the course.

Regular training courses on municipal governance will be organized by the OSCE Institute for Civil Administration, to be opened in the early months of 2000. The Institute will serve as a permanent training facility for municipal officials.

Civil society development conference held in Belarus

The OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group last month organized the fourth of six regional conferences, aimed at aiding the development of civil society in Belarus. Held in Brest from 16-18 December, the conferences on ‘Local self-government, rule of law and regional economic development,’ brought together international experts, local and regional administrators and representatives of Belarussian civil society.

Women’s conference held in Bosnia

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina organized a ‘Women Can Do It’ evaluation strategy conference in Sarajevo last month, where 65 Bosnian trainers shared experiences gained from the 143 seminars they had conducted over the past three months. A strategy for follow-up training of more than 800 potential women candidates for the April 2000 municipal elections was developed.

A premiere screening of the OSCE-produced TV documentary ‘In her own name’, which showed how determined Bosnian women can make a difference by influencing their political environment.

In this 55-minute documentary, 22 women from all over BiH and representing various political parties, NGOs and women’s organizations, provide an absorbing account of women’s increasing political empowerment in BiH and present their visions of the future role of women in the Bosnian society. The programme will be offered to interested TV stations free of charge.

IN BRIEF



Andorra signs the Helsinki Final Act

On 10 November, the Principality of Andorra signed the Conference on

Security and Co-operation Final, more widely known as the Helsinki Final Act. The original signing of the Final Act, on 1 August 1975, by 35 Heads of State and Government, marked the end of a series of diplomatic negotiations within the framework of the Conference on Co-operation and Security in Europe (CSCE), which became the OSCE in 1994. Alongside the Charter of Paris of 1990, the Helsinki Final Act is considered one of the key founding documents of the Organization.

The Principality of Andorra became a OSCE participating State on 25 April 1996, and signed the Charter of Paris on 17 February 1998.

OSCE Chairman addresses UN General Assembly

On 6 December, the then Chairman-in-Office, Norway's Foreign Minister, Knut Vollebaek, addressed the United Nations General Assembly. He described the two organizations as natural partners, allowing the UN to leave more of the responsibility for Europe to the OSCE as the effectiveness of the OSCE increases. Mr. Vollebaek said the OSCE will increasingly be in a position to make important contributions to security and stability, acting on behalf of, or in sup-

port of, the UN, but also on its own. "This would enable the United Nations to concentrate more of its attention on conflict management in parts of the world where regional frameworks are not as well developed," he said.

Briefing the Assembly on the outcome of the Istanbul Summit, Mr. Vollebaek mentioned the adoption of a Charter for European Security – which will facilitate closer co-operation between the OSCE and other international organizations, such as the UN. The Chairman-in-Office also recalled developments in areas where the UN and the OSCE co-operate, describing the situation in Kosovo as the greatest joint challenge during the past half-year.

CiO condemns "life-presidency" decision in Turkmenistan

In a statement issued on 30 December, the outgoing Chairman-in-Office, Norwegian Foreign Minister, Knut Vollebaek, said the decision of the People's Assembly of Turkmenistan to delegate to the President, Saparmurat Niyazov, the right to serve without term limits, was "a violation of the basic right of the people of any country to choose their leaders in regular, free and fair elections conducted to universally recognized democratic principles."

These principles, said Mr. Vollebaek, are part and parcel of the commitments of the OSCE participating States and as such must also be faithfully implemented by Turkmenistan.

On 28 December, the People's

Assembly of Turkmenistan approved the decree to give President Niyazov the right to remain "president-for-life" by acclamation. The Assembly, constitutionally the highest organ of state power in Turkmenistan, meets once a year to confirm legislative action of the Parliament. The decision was contained in a Parliamentary decree, rather than a proposed constitutional amendment, in order to avoid establishing a precedent.

In a separate statement, Director Gerard Stoudmann of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, said: "This development – effectively the creation of a presidency for life – is unprecedented among OSCE participating States and has deeply disturbing human rights implications. Establishment of a life presidency seriously undermines the basis of pluralist democracy and rule of law which all OSCE participating States have agreed are prerequisites for peace, security, justice and co-operation."

Freimut Duve, the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media, also issued a statement condemning the decision, pointing out that it further curtails media freedom in Turkmenistan. "The corrective function of the media, its ability to criticise government and fight corruption, is set back even further," Mr. Duve said.

"Turkmenistan is the only country in the OSCE region with virtually no independent media, and this declaration makes the development of any critical media even more unlikely," he added.

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ELECTIONS



Flawed Parliamentary poll in Uzbekistan

The ODIHR Limited Election Assessment Mission to Uzbekistan, headed by Ambassador Madelaine Ströje-Wilkens, of Sweden, concluded that the 5 December parliamentary election of deputies to the Oliy Majlis fell short of the OSCE commitments on democratic elections, enshrined in the 1990 Copenhagen Document. In particular, the commitments for a free, fair, equal, transparent and accountable election were breached. The ODIHR decided not to undertake a full observation, due to concerns that the broad electoral framework in Uzbekistan does not permit a truly pluralist, competitive election.

Election in Turkmenistan fails to meet commitments

A parliamentary election took place in Turkmenistan on 12 December. The ODIHR deployed neither an observation nor a limited assessment mission because of grave concerns that the broad electoral framework in Turkmenistan falls far short of the OSCE commitments formulated in the 1990 Copenhagen Document. The ODIHR expressed concerns that, in Turkmenistan, even a minimum level of pluralism is absent and that fundamental freedoms are severely restricted.

Parliamentary election observed in Russian Federation

In co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of

Europe Parliamentary Assembly, and the European Parliament, the ODIHR observed the parliamentary election in the Russian Federation held on 19 December. Ambassador Edouard Brunne, of Switzerland, headed the ODIHR Election Observation Mission. On election day, more than 400 short-term observers were deployed, who visited some 4,000 polling stations across the country. The International Observation Mission concluded that the election of deputies to the State Duma marked significant progress for the consolidation of democracy in the Russian Federation.

The election law is consistent with internationally recognized democratic principles and provides for parties and blocs to enter the political arena on an equal basis, and ensures a level playing field for all candidates. Moreover, the law provides for a significantly increased level of transparency in all phases of the electoral process. The Central Election Commission endeavoured to implement fully the electoral legislation. The media in the Russian Federation are pluralistic and diverse, however, most important segments of the media failed to provide impartial and fair information about the political choices on offer to the electorate.

Needs assessment mission visits Kyrgyzstan

On the invitation of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the ODIHR sent a Needs Assessment Mission to Bishkek on 14-17 December, in preparation for the parliamentary election scheduled for 20 February. On the basis of the findings of the needs assessment mission the

ODIHR decided to establish a full-fledged Election Observation Mission in January and has requested 14 long-term observers from the OSCE participating States.

ODIHR send needs assessment mission to Tajikistan

In preparation for the 27 February parliamentary elections, the ODIHR sent a needs assessment mission to Tajikistan on 14-17 December. Following the visit of the mission, the ODIHR decided to establish an Election Observation Mission and requested 30 long-term observers from the OSCE participating States. The OSCE, as well as the United Nations, committed themselves to observe the parliamentary elections under the 1997 General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan.

DEMOCRATIZATION



NGO-Government meeting focuses on freedom of religion in Kazakhstan

In response to a suggestion by the OSCE Centre in Almaty, the last meeting of the ODIHR 1999 Civil Society Assistance Programme in Kazakhstan was devoted to the issue of freedom of religion. The meeting took place in Almaty on 10 December. It was well attended by NGO and Government representatives, and was moderated by the ODIHR expert, Dr. Bahia Tahzib-Lie, of the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands.

The meeting proved to be successful in bringing together NGO and Government representatives to openly discuss their concerns in the field of freedom of religion. It also contributed to breaking down the walls of distrust between Government officials and those religious associations which were not consulted on the 1998 draft amendments to the Law on the Freedom of Religion and Religious Associations. Practical recommendations put forward by the participants during the meeting included organizing regular NGO-government roundtables on freedom of religion issues, a workshop on legitimate registration requirements, and stimulating inter-religious dialogue through the establishment of national, regional or local councils on religion or belief. A joint declaration was adopted at the end of the meeting, reinforcing the commitment to continue a balanced and constructive dialogue.

NGO-Government meeting on law enforcement bodies in Kyrgyzstan

The last NGO-Government meeting under the ODIHR Civil Society Assistance Programme in Kyrgyzstan was held on 14 December in Bishkek. The meeting, organized by the ODIHR in co-operation with the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, focused on possible forms of dialogue and co-operation between NGOs and law enforcement bodies.

Some 80 NGO and government representatives attended the meeting. Participants discussed the possibilities offered by the new NGO Law and explored ways to improve NGO access to information on activities of the law enforcement bodies.

The final session was devoted to the formulation of a set of concrete recommendation, aimed at fostering constructive co-operation within the existing legislative framework. One of the propos-

als, the establishment of a permanent forum for regular meetings, can be considered as a starting point for a self-sustained co-operation process.

NGO strategy development meeting held in Uzbekistan

The last meeting of the 1999 ODIHR Civil Society Assistance programme in Uzbekistan was organized as a strategy development workshop for domestic NGOs on 10-13 December in Chimgan. About 20 NGO and community leaders from different regions of Uzbekistan participated in the workshop, which was set up as a group-building exercise, aiming at defining strategies to improve future co-operation among NGOs in Uzbekistan. The ODIHR invited two well-known NGO activists, Ivan Cicak and Mladen Majetic, both having broad experience with similar workshops in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, to act as facilitators.

The participating NGOs succeeded in developing an action plan to increase their co-operation at the national level. How NGOs can maximize the impact of their work and influence the promotion of democracy and human rights in Uzbekistan were issues at the centre of the discussions. The participants agreed to focus on three priority areas: the development of informational and technical co-operation, the improvement of NGO legislation and protection of NGO rights, and increasing the possibilities to support sustainable NGO development. Subsequently, the participants put together a list of 11 concrete activities to be implemented in 2000, including the creation of an NGO and journalist database, increasing co-operation with mass media and local authorities, and the establishment of regional NGO resource and education centres. Based on this action plan, the NGOs and international donors are now in a better position to work concretely on

strengthening NGO co-operation at the national level in 2000.

Help for the regionalization of the Uzbek Ombudsman office

The ODIHR, together with the OSCE Liaison Office in Central Asia, conducted an initial training seminar for the newly-appointed regional representatives of the Uzbek Ombudsman office on 16-18 December in Chimgan. A representative of the Polish Ombudsman institution conducted the training. The Liaison Office and a professor of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tash-kent provided further valuable information. The training is part of ODIHR efforts to assist in the regionalization of the Ombudsman institution with the aim of enhancing its field reach, accessibility and transparency. Technical issues such as complaints handling were addressed, and the training provided information about international human rights standards and their enforcement.

Workshop held in FYROM for young Roma activists

Some 30 leaders of major Roma youth organizations active in the OSCE area participated in a workshop held by the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, in co-operation with the Roma Community Centre DROM on 11-16 December in Kumanovo, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). During the first part of the workshop, participants identified possibilities of establishing a network between young Roma activists and youth associations at regional and sub-regional level. The second part focused on policy-making on Roma and on the risks and challenges of the broader geo-political developments.

Training sessions were devoted to improving practical skills and using appropriate tools for addressing prob-



The ODIHR delegation meets representatives of the Ukrainian border guards service

lems relating to the specific situation of Roma in the OSCE area in an efficient manner. The training also included presentations on Roma-related activities implemented within the OSCE context and by other international organizations.

The lively discussions during the workshop resulted, inter alia, in the commitment by the participants to increase their networking activities, aiming at a more direct and efficient involvement in the reconstruction and transformation processes in the Kosovo and other regions of the OSCE area. As a follow-up, a workshop on the legal status of Roma refugees from Kosovo in the FYROM will be organized in Skopje on 28 February by the ODIHR Contact Point.

Needs assessment mission on reform of border guard service in Ukraine

From 7 to 11 December, an ODIHR delegation consisting of Captain Andrzej Tkacz, Department Head and Senior Lecturer in Law at the Border Guards Training Centre of Poland, and Vladimir Shkolnikov, the ODIHR Migration Adviser, carried out a needs assessment mission in

Ukraine for the project on the reform of the border guard service of Ukraine. The ODIHR delegation was also accompanied by the head of the International Organization for Migration office in Kyiv, Steve Cook, and by Igor Bosc, Project Officer at the office of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Kyiv. The delegation had meetings at the headquarters of the border guards service in Kyiv and also travelled to the Border Guards Academy of Ukraine located in Khmelnytsky. Many of the ODIHR's interlocutors expressed the view that the Central European experience is clearly the most relevant for Ukraine.

The needs assessment mission recommended top-level commanders of the Ukrainian Border Service visit Poland to get acquainted with the overall structure and mission of the Polish border services. It was also suggested that law instructors of the Ukrainian Border Guards Academy visit the Polish Border Guards Training Centre to become more familiar with the Polish model and especially with the legal and human rights curriculum offered to Polish border guards.

Workshops with journalists from northern Caucasus

In November and early December, the ODIHR, in co-operation with the BBC World Service, organized three five-day workshops in Rostov-on-Don for broadcast journalists from the North Caucasus region aimed at promoting effective journalism and offering practical advice on how to apply ethical standards.

The first two workshops focused on how to report on inter-faith and inter-ethnic conflict. An expert with broad experience in covering conflict situations conducted the workshops. The schedule included sessions on principles of objectivity and balance as well as practical exercises in news writing, editing, interviewing and covering press conferences.

The third workshop was devoted to how journalists can offer a balanced coverage of elections. The workshop focused on ethical guidelines for responsible journalism and the improvement of practical skills against the backdrop of the specific problems of the Russian context.

NEWS from the High Commissioner on National Minorities

The Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) is located at Prinsessegracht 22, NL-2514 AP The Hague, The Netherlands, tel.: (+31-70) 312 55 00, fax: (+31-70) 363 59 10, e-mail: hcnm@hcnm.org

High Commissioner attends the “Max van der Stoel Symposium”

On 3 and 4 December, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel, was the guest of honour at a symposium given in his name. ‘Max van der Stoel Symposium’ was held at the University of Lund in Sweden, as an initiative of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and co-organized by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. The event brought together past and present government leaders, diplomats, senior officials, heads of non-governmental organizations and independent experts from all parts of the world to reflect upon the work of the HCNM and to consider how the approach developed by Max van der Stoel may be usefully followed beyond the OSCE area.

Joint statement issued on Grozny ultimatum

On 8 December, Max van der Stoel, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, together with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Walter Schwimmer, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, issued a statement in which they expressed their “profound concern for the situation of civilians in Grozny who, according to the ultimatum of 6 December from the federal authorities of the Russian Federation, are given no other choice than to leave the city within five days or risk injury or death as the result of indiscriminate bombardment.” The statement emphasised, and called for the strict

respect of, the “obligations of the Russian Federation under international law”. It noted that, “whatever its motivation, any police or security action must conform to fundamental humanitarian principles. Everything possible must be done to save and protect innocent lives.”

Documentary on HCNM premieres in the Hague

On 20 December, a documentary film about OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel, entitled ‘The Silent Diplomat’, was premiered to an invited audience at the Peace Palace in the Hague, the Netherlands. The 52 minute film, directed by award winning Dutch film maker Rob Hof and narrated by Canadian philosopher, historian and film maker, Michael Ignatieff, provides a unique insight into how Mr. van der Stoel works behind the scenes in areas of potential conflict. It follows him on his travels throughout the OSCE area and tries to understand who the ‘Silent Diplomat’ is, what he does and what makes him successful. The film was due to be shown on Dutch television in early January. Copies are available on request from the Office of the HCNM.

HCNM speaks in Bratislava on human rights developments

On 10 December, the High Commissioner attended a conference of the Visegrad Four countries on Human Rights in Bratislava. The following is an edited excerpt from his speech.

“It is perhaps too early to look back at the last 100 years with measured objectivity. But I think it is fair to say

that one of the defining characteristics of the 20th century was the impact of excessive nationalism and the clash between the principles of sovereignty and self-determination. Wars have been fought in defence of these principles; states have been created and broken up in their name; ideologies have been driven by them; and millions of people have been expelled or killed either fighting for, or being victimized by, nationalistic or ethnically-based ideals.

“But there is nothing inevitable about inter-ethnic conflict. It is man-made and can be prevented by mankind. People are not somehow predisposed to fight each other because of differences in language and culture. The idea of the nation-state protecting the so-called “state-forming nation” is losing its relevance in an increasingly inter-dependent world. We still see spasms of nationalistic excess in Europe from people who promote or defend an ethnic rather than a civic view of the state. This is dangerous for, as we have seen too often in this century, appeals to ethnic nationalism come at the expense of the equal rights of individuals, especially those in the minority. As the negative impact of malign nationalism and the inability to satisfy the aspirations of minorities without violently breaking up States will be with us well into the next century unless we come up with new ways of accommodating and integrating diversity within the political order of the State and developing more effective means of protecting the rights of minorities.

“In the past 50 years, we have developed a culture of human rights that pro-

pects the rights of individuals and stresses that when it comes to human rights abuses the defense of “internal affairs” is no longer acceptable. In Europe, this has included the elaboration of specific human rights standards for the protection of persons belonging to national minorities, like the OSCE’s Copenhagen Document and the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

“The state is responsible to create an environment where everyone can enjoy their identity and pursue their development. As few modern societies are ethnically homogeneous, this means integrating minorities into the broader society.

“The need for integrating diversity should be one of the main lessons that we take from the 20th century. Attempts to create, peacefully or violently, ethnically “pure” nation-states have largely failed. Multi-ethnic society is a reality which one can not “solve”. Diversity and pluralism must be accepted and seen as potential sources of strength rather than as weaknesses or threats.

Avoiding disparities

“Integrating diversity is not the same thing as assimilation. When integrating groups within society we must pursue equality, not in terms of sameness, but in terms of meaningful opportunities”. We must also avoid disparities. Inequality –

whether it be in terms of human rights, economic prosperity, access to education or employment and so on – can cause flash points that make “difference” look like threat. This can lead to conflict. A key to avoiding conflict is therefore to combat the worst excesses of inequality within and between states and to allow for the full flourishing of diversity.

“In its most basic form, this means the creation of a level playing field. This involves combating discrimination and racism, reducing socio-economic cleavages and lowering real and psychological barriers between groups. It also means recognizing, protecting and promoting the identity of minorities, creating possibilities for dialogue, effective participation in decision-making processes, and being responsive to the linguistic, educational and cultural needs of minorities. “The key to peaceful inter-ethnic relations is to weave ethnic fibres together to strengthen the fabric of society and to prevent the existing threads from unraveling. That is one of the greatest challenges for Europe, indeed the whole world, for the next century. This challenge can be met if we learn from the past and redouble our efforts to protect minorities and integrate diversity. We must put more emphasis on conflict prevention in order to avoid the types of bloody inter-ethnic conflicts that have marred this century.”

HCNM pays visit to Helsinki

On 12 and 13 December, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Max van der Stoel, visited Helsinki upon the invitation of the Finnish Foreign Ministry and the Finnish Institute of Foreign Affairs. He gave a lecture on his work in the Baltic Sea region and met with President Ahtisaari and representatives of the Foreign Ministry.

HCNM visits FYROM and Kosovo

From 14 to 17 December, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Max van der Stoel, visited the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Kosovo. In Skopje he discussed the recent political changes which manifested themselves during the presidential election of November and December. He was particularly interested in how the political changes could effect inter-ethnic relations between the Macedonian and Albanian communities. Discussions continued on the creation of an Albanian language university.

In Kosovo the High Commissioner met representatives of the Serb, Roma, Ashkali, Turkish, and Muslim Slav communities in order to familiarize himself with the current situation of the minorities. He also had discussions with Albanian representatives and members of the international community.

NEWS from the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

The Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media is located at Kärtner Ring 5-7, A-1010 Vienna, Austria, tel.: (+43-1) 512 21 45-0, fax: (+43-1) 512 21 45-9, e-mail: pm-fom@osce.org

Roundtable on libel law in Ukraine

On 2 December, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Council of Europe and Irex/ProMedia held a public roundtable on Free Media

and Libel Legislation in Kyiv, capital of Ukraine. The roundtable, which took place at the Institute for Foreign Affairs of Kyiv University, was held in co-operation with the Government of Ukraine

and the Office of the OSCE Project Coordinator. It was attended by over 100 participants, among them government and parliament officials, judges, lawyers and journalists.

The objective of this roundtable, proposed by the OSCE Representative during his visit to Kyiv in May last year, was to assemble responsible Ukrainian agencies (executive, legislative, judiciary) as well as the Ukrainian media to provide a detailed analysis of the current situation and to prepare recommendations on possible steps forward. The participation of experts from the Council of Europe and from Poland provided information on international legal standards and current practices regarding libel and defamation.

In their recommendations, the OSCE Representative and the Council of Europe advised the Ukrainian Government on how to improve the application of already existing legislation in the field of libel and on other measures that should be taken to improve the current situation. Among other things, the roundtable urged the Government to ensure the proper application by the courts of domestic law in compliance with European legal standards.

Appeal for timely release of Serbian journalist

Freimut Duve, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, appealed to Belgrade on 9 December to free

the journalist, Nebojsa Ristic, in time for him to be back with his family for the millennium and the Orthodox Christmas. Nebojsa Ristic, editor of TV Soko in Sokobanja, eastern Serbia, was found guilty in April by the Sokobanja District Court of disseminating false information after he publicly displayed a poster, 'Free Press: Made in Serbia', with a Radio B92 stamp. Mr. Duve believed that the journalist's imprisonment was additional proof that the 1998 Serbian Law on Public Information was continuously used to wipe out any remnants of a free and independent media.

Harrasment of media in Azerbaijan

On 16 December, Freimut Duve, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, wrote to the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Vilayat Gouliyev, conveying his dismay regarding the campaign of harassment against SARA-TV. Mr. Duve noted the heavy-handed tactics were used by the police to close the station down on 9 October. He stressed that since then, SARA-TV had not resumed broadcasting. In the Representative's view, the action was a clear attempt to take off the air one of the few independent television stations in Azerbaijan.

RFOM intervention assists journalists in Grozny

On 20 December, Mr. Duve was informed that eight journalists working in Grozny had not been in contact with their agencies for two days. Duve immediately got in touch with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty to clarify the situation (their correspondent was one of the few who had a working telephone) and then intervened with the Russian authorities and asked them to help locate the journalists and ensure their passage out of Grozny. The next day these reporters were able to leave the area safely.

Also that day, Mr. Duve intervened with the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, regarding certain statements made by Russian defence and security officials denouncing correspondents from Reuters and Associated Press working in Chechnya as "agents of western secret services" or as "agents of Chechen secret services." Mr. Duve stressed such official statements not only affected the future work of all journalists in the area, but could also have resulted in direct physical danger to those particular journalists. He urged the Russian Government to distance itself from such declarations made by some of its officials.

DIPLOMATISCHE AKADEMIE WIEN

Freimut Duve

OSCE Representative of the Freedom of the Media

is speaking on

Freedom of the Media: A prerequisite for good Governance

9 February, 12.00, Festsaal

Favoritenstr. 15a, 1040 Vienna



REPORT from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is located at Rådhusstræde 1, DK-1466 Copenhagen K, Denmark, tel.: (+45-33) 32 94 00, fax: (+45-33) 32 55 05, e-mail: osce@oscepa.dk

Parliamentarians monitor Russia's Duma elections

The President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Helle Degn, was appointed Special Representative of the Chairman-in-Office to lead the OSCE Election Observation Mission to the State Duma election on 19 December. The Mission comprised more than 400 international short-term observers, including more than 130 parliamentarians from the OSCE PA, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, the European Parliament, the Nordic Council and the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

The OSCE PA Observer Team consisted of members of parliament from Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

The parliamentarians were given extensive briefings, which included meetings with the Speaker of the Russian State Duma, Gennady Seleznev, the Chairman of the Central Election Commission, Alexander Vishniakov, as well as meetings with the leadership of the major political parties and representatives of the media. President Degn also held separate meetings with the Speaker of the Russian State Duma, with Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov and with Former Prime-Minister Evgeny Primakov.



Parliamentary Assembly President, Helle Degn, talking with the Speaker of the Russian Duma (Parliament) Genady Seleznev on election day

During Election Day, the PA delegation was divided into 52 teams, which visited polling stations in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Krasnoyarsk, Murmansk, Nizhny Novgorod and Khabarovsk. Delegation members visited more than 700 polling stations and witnessed the opening and closing procedures. In total 4000 polling stations across the country were visited by international observers.

At a press conference in Moscow on 20 December, President Degn issued a joint statement of preliminary findings and conclusions in conjunction with Ernst Muehlemann, Head of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's

Election Observation Delegation, Constanze Krehl, Head of the European Parliament Ad Hoc Observation Delegation and Ambassador Edouard Brunner, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission. According to the joint statement, the State Duma elections marked significant progress for the consolidation of democracy in the Russian Federation and an increased level of confidence in the democratic process. Concerns were expressed in the statement regarding issues such as media bias, campaign expenditures and interference by executive authorities in the election process.

At the press conference Mrs. Degn emphasized that, "the statement shows that the international observation effort has been thorough and profes-

sional, showing the balanced view of the practical eyes of parliamentarians from many countries, who themselves are subject to election". Mrs. Degn affirmed that "the joint statement also shows that the electoral system in the Russian Federation has reached a new level of maturity and sophistication." The OSCE PA President concluded by expressing her belief that, "this election process will strengthen the Duma as one of the most important democratic institutions in this country."

Chair of PA Belarus Democracy Team visits Minsk

On 11-15 December, Adrian Severin visited Minsk for the sixth time in 1999

as Chairman of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Democracy Team on Belarus. Mr. Severin sought to continue consultations with the Belarusian government and opposition in order to facilitate the opening of a series of roundtable meetings designed to bring about free and fair elections in Belarus which are acceptable both internationally and domestically. The Parliamentary Group has been working for the past year with the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group on a strategy to overcome the political crises in Belarus through holding elections.

Mr. Severin focused his attention on the issues preventing the implementation of an already-signed agreement on access for the opposition to the state-controlled mass media. He also sought to emphasize the need for implementation of human rights confidence-building measures by the government and for the need to begin election negotiations in the near future.

During this visit to Minsk, Mr. Severin met the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, as well as with a number of governmental specialists and officials. He also met with the Presidium of the 13th Supreme Soviet, the advisory council of opposition political parties, NGOs and several research institutes. Mr. Severin also met the former Prime Minister, Michael Chigir, and with the families of political prisoners.

assisted by, and work in conjunction with, the OSCE Observer Mission in Bishkek. All OSCE observers are now deployed in co-operation as provided in the 1998 Joint Agreement between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR. The parliamentarians are part of a substantial short-term observer corps expected to be deployed across Kyrgyzstan.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to monitor the elections in Kyrgyzstan

A delegation from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will participate in the short-term monitoring of the parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan on 20 February. The Assembly Delegation will be



PA President, Mrs. Degen, meets voters outside a Moscow polling station

Seminar on minorities and Expanded Bureau Meeting in Antalya

On 12 and 13 April, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey are jointly organizing a Seminar in Antalya, Turkey, entitled 'New risks and challenges: minorities in the 21st Century'. The seminar theme will focus on a number of issues, including the role that parliaments may play in seeking to develop co-operation strategies, to build internal security and to solve complex ethno-political issues. Coping with regionalism and ethnicity as political issues and finding legislative solutions to the concerns of groups within a society and between neighbouring States are topics that will also be discussed.

The Seminar will provide an occasion for the participants to exchange views and deepen their understanding of minority issues within the wider context of OSCE principles and the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security.

The Seminar will be preceded by a meeting of the OSCE PA Expanded Bureau on 10 to 11 April. The Expanded Bureau consists of the President of the Assembly, the Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer, the President Emeritus and the Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteurs of the three General Committees. The meeting in Antalya will focus on the preparations for the Ninth Annual Session to be held in Bucharest, Romania, from 6 to 10 July.

REPORT

from the OSCE Secretary General and the Secretariat

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Working visits in December

In December, OSCE Secretary General, Jan Kubis, visited the United Nations in New York and the European Union in Brussels. In New York, He met senior United Nations officials, including Deputy Secretary General Louis Frechette and the Under-Secretaries-General, Bernard Miyet, Kieran Prendergast and Benon Sevan. Discussions focused on co-operation in the field, namely in Kosovo, Tajikistan and Georgia – areas where both the United Nations and the OSCE have field operations – and on security-related matters. Ambassador Kubis also joined the then OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Norway's Foreign Minister, Knut Vollebaek, for a meeting with the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

In Brussels, the Secretary General met the European Union High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana. During the meeting, Mr. Solana and Ambassador Kubis discussed future co-operation, including developing the OSCE's REACT programme and the European Union non-military crisis management mechanism. Both initiatives are designed to strengthen the respective organizations' ability to quickly and effectively respond to demand for civilian and police expertise in conflict situations. Ambassador Kubis also briefed the EU OSCE Working Group on post-Istanbul tasks and the priorities of the OSCE Secretariat.

The Secretary General also met with Angel Vinas, Director for General Matters and Multilateral Relations in the European Commission, with the aim of agreeing on a programme of our future

contacts and co-operation. He also discussed specific co-operation in Central Asia, the Caucasus and South-Eastern Europe.

Mediterranean Seminar focuses on human dimension of security

The relevance of OSCE mechanisms and instruments to the Mediterranean region was the focus of the seminar on 'Implementation of Human Dimension Commitments', held in Amman, Jordan, from 6 to 7 December. The seminar was organized by the OSCE Secretariat, the Section for External Co-operation (Conflict Prevention Centre), in co-operation with the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy.

The seminar – the fifth annual Mediterranean Seminar organized in the framework of co-operation between the OSCE and its six Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation (Egypt, Algeria, Israel, Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan) – was dedicated to the question of the human dimension of security, including risks and challenges, experience gained in OSCE field operations, and the relevance of OSCE tools for the Mediterranean region.

More than 150 participants attended, including delegations from all six partners, 30 OSCE participating States, representatives of OSCE Missions and Institutions, and international and non-governmental organizations.

During the discussions, specific recommendations were put forward regarding the strengthening of co-operation between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners. Participants felt that the partnership should be shaped into a more

systematic process, instead of being based on sporadic events. It was proposed that high-level ministerial consultations be supported by additional meetings at the level of senior officials. It was also suggested that political leaders from Mediterranean Partners visit and address the Permanent Council in Vienna, with a view to stimulating and promoting dialogue and co-operation.

The Mediterranean Partners were also encouraged to take greater advantage of OSCE expertise by visiting OSCE Institutions, Missions and field activities. It was suggested that a workshop be organized in Vienna for representatives from the Partner States, so that they may be briefed on existing OSCE instruments and mechanisms. Other meetings, including roundtables on specific issues, could also be held.

The consolidated summary of the seminar and all the documents distributed during the seminar are available upon request from the OSCE Secretariat. This and other information regarding previous OSCE Mediterranean Seminars, will shortly be made available on the OSCE website.

Environmental aspects of conflicts raised in Sarajevo

Over 100 participants discussed the environmental impact of conflicts and rehabilitation measures at a seminar held from 13 to 14 December, in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The event, organized by the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, was the second of three sub-regional seminars that will lead up to the annual OSCE Economic

Forum, due to be held from 11 to 14 April 2000, in Prague.

The seminar, under the title the 'Environmental impact of conflicts and rehabilitation measures', was organized in co-operation with the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was attended by representatives of OSCE participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, OSCE Missions and field activities, as well as other international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from across South-Eastern Europe. During the opening plenary, participants drew attention to the severe impact of armed conflict and refugees on the environment, and emphasized the fact that environmental damage was not only an effect, but could also be a cause of conflict.

The specific case of Kosovo was dis-

cussed, particularly the direct and indirect effects of the conflict on air, water, and soil. Deliberations covered possible rehabilitation measures, as well as the scope for trans-boundary co-operation and the role of NGOs in responding to the environmental impacts of conflict in the region.

Some participants emphasized the fact that, since certain types of environmental damage are irreversible, conflict prevention is of fundamental importance. It was felt that the OSCE could play an important role in this field by imparting the necessary political impetus towards fostering international co-operation. By integrating the areas of security and the environment, the OSCE could help bring environmental concerns from the grassroots level to the attention of political and security decision-makers.

The need for strengthening trans-border co-operation on environmental issues was another issue highlighted during the seminar. Participants of the two working groups, including several environment ministers from the region, underlined the fact that regional co-operation regarding environmental issues could foster wider regional co-operation, thereby reinforcing civil society and sustainable development in the region. Joint initiatives regarding environmental security could thus constitute an important confidence-building measure.

The seminar was widely regarded as a very successful event. The third and final seminar leading up to the OSCE Economic Forum, entitled 'Experiences with Post-Conflict Rehabilitation Efforts', takes place in Tbilisi, Georgia, the 26 and 27 January.

OSCE successfully implements Y2K plans

During the Year 2000 roll-over period, the the Organization for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) Situation Centre in Vienna reported that all field activities and institutions were able to carry out normal tasks as planned.

"From the OSCE point of view, Y2K forced us to implement a thorough review of our information technology network and to plan for our future requirements by introducing state-of-the-art systems and equipment," Secretary General Jan Kubis reported in January.

"This had the extra advantage of not only making the OSCE immune to any Y2K glitches, but also giving the Organization up-graded technology systems that will increase efficiency and effectiveness."

The OSCE began working on the Y2K problem early in 1999 with a sur-

vey of all computer systems and began gradually replacing all obsolete equipment. The original financial system was not Y2K compliant and has been replaced with a new Oracle financial and material management system that, when fully operational, will provide the OSCE with improved internal controls, information flow and communications between the Secretariat and field operations.

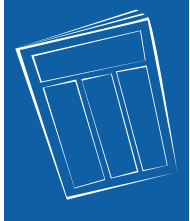
In April 1999, the Y2K Readiness Task Force was established in the Secretariat, bringing together staff from selected units to examine potential problem areas and assess the OSCE level of preparedness. The Task Force alerted OSCE Institutions and field activities to alert them of potential risks and received feedback on their activities and plans to ensure Y2K compliance.

"We passed the initial roll-over period

with great success," explained the Chair of the OSCE Y2K Task Force. "This is the direct result of significant efforts carried out by staff in all OSCE offices. Many people, especially those in the information technology and financial fields, worked very hard to ensure Y2K compatibility and operations as usual throughout the Organization. It is evident that all our efforts and planning can be considered a success."

Although the 31 December transition was considered very successful, the Secretary General noted the Y2K Task Force will continue to monitor possible problem areas until 1 March 2000. A roll-over on 29 February is considered another date to watch because 2000 is a leap year, an event which only occurs every fourth century. Calendars in some programmes may not have taken account of this.

PRESS PROFILE



Excerpts from international media coverage of the OSCE and its activities over the preceding weeks.

KOSOVO

Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 6 December

‘The OSCE has compiled two reports on the serious violations of human rights that have taken place in Kosovo. The reports are as thick as two phone directories... The specific strength in these reports is that they are based on a large amount of observations and eyewitness accounts, which make them very reliable as well as credible. The information has been collected and prepared following a coherent method and is presented in a systematic manner, in clearly arranged chapters with eloquent headlines. The OSCE reports can therefore be used as a Kosovo handbook in contemporary history.’

The New York Times, 5 December

‘Two extraordinarily detailed reports on human rights abuses in Kosovo, drawn from official Western sources, present a depressing picture of an ugly war, full of individual and collective cruelty and crime by the Serbs, followed by an ugly peace displaying many of

the same depredations, if on a smaller scale, by the province’s Albanians. The reports... are prepared by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe from its own interviews... Given the numbers of the interviews, the accretion of fact and the character of the European agency itself, these reports will have an important impact.’

Le Monde, 11 January

‘The thousands of witness testimonies gathered in Kosovo, before, during and after the NATO intervention gave rise to two reports from human rights sections of the OSCE. *Le Monde* is publishing the conclusion of these reports, together with the history of the main violations. Although these violations, which mostly affected the Albanian Kosovars increased after the beginning of NATO’s intervention on 24 March 1999, the OSCE shows that the Serbian machinery of repression was already in place before that date, with all its summary executions and phoney trials.’

CHECHNYA

Die Presse, 28 December

‘At the occasion of a Summit Meeting, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe uttered some harsh words, and decided to send a mission to Chechnya... Since then, the dis-

astrous Caucasus trip of the OSCE Chairman has been wrapped in silence.’

Der Standard, 18 December

‘After his three days reconnaissance mission to northern Caucasus, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Knut Vollebaek, warned of a blood bath in the Chechen capital Grozny... The exhortations by the OSCE to peace negotiations under international mediation have been brusquely brushed aside by Russia... Only a few years ago, Russia was demanding that the OSCE and not NATO should be the most important security policy instrument in the new Europe. Today, Moscow is ready to give the OSCE in Chechnya a humanitarian role at most.’

Die Presse, 30 December

‘NATO has become the cornerstone of European security; the OSCE is incapable of filling that role, above all because there hardly can be any consensus between 55 participating States with very different interests and with a geographical span from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The OSCE’s role has changed, but it has by no means become redundant. It is a complementary instrument for conflict prevention, it observes, gives early warning, organizes elections after the end of an armed conflict, trains police forces, gives humanitarian assistance. And not least, it offers an important, indispensable speaking forum for a united Europe.’

Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik
an der Universität Hamburg/IFSH

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